1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

stored there, and to see that everything is in order;[1] and after reaping is completed a general return (extending over several weeks), is customary so that all *bilek* families may join in the performance of harvest and other rites. During crucial stages of the agricultural cycle however (i.e. felling, sowing, weeding and reaping), the main long-house is almost invariably deserted, members of all *bilek* families living exclusively in their *dampa*. On 1st March, 1949, for example, when I arrived unannounced at the long-house of Temenggong Koh, in the Ulu Baleh, I found all of its forty apartments untenanted; logs of wood were propped against closed doors, *padi* mortars (*lesong*) were upturned and the planks of the *ruai*, bare of mats, and thick with dust—the whole house had the forlorn and derelict air of an unfrequented building. As I discovered, when I travelled on upriver, everyone was preoccupied with the harvest, and the various *bilek* families of the community were living in their *dampa*, distant, in some cases, about seven miles from the main long-house. The encountering of deserted long-houses is a common experience in the Baleh region—but only if one travels unannounced. Normally, the movements of Government officers are made known well in advance, and in good time there is a general return to the main long-house—for it is believed that Government is opposed to the *dampa* system.[2] In this way, the fiction of the permanently occupied long-house is successfully perpetuated; but within an hour or so of the officer's departure, the people are making their way back to their scattered *dampa*.

74. Such surveys as I was able to carry out suggest that the *dampa* system is widely prevalent throughout the Baleh region (and, indeed, in all other similar pioneer areas), all but the smallest of long-houses finding it an imperative expedient. If subsistence is to be maintained and adequate crops be achieved it is essential that those managing a farm should live as close to it as possible. Granted the method of shifting cultivation, recourse to the *dampa* system is inevitable as soon as a community increases beyond about eight *bilek* families, and farms become removed by more than a mile or two from the original centre of cultivation. The various *dampa* into which the *bilek* families of a community are grouped, at any given time, may be thought of then, as satellite houses, in relation to the main long-house—temporary habitations brought into being by the exigencies of shifting cultivation.

*The Dampa System at Rumah Nyala*

75. To illustrate the working of the *dampa* system in further detail, let us now consider the conditions existing at Rumah Nyala, during the two farming seasons 1949-50 and 1950-51. Rumah Nyala, it will be remembered, is a community of 25 *bilek* families, and the main long-house is situated on the true right bank of the Sungai Sut, some four or five miles from the Sut-Baleh confluence.

[1]Some communities in the Baleh possess rubber plantations, and these plantations (held in private ownership by individual *bilek* families) are generally close to the main long-house. Where rubber plantations do exist, it is usual to find that one or more of the men of each *bilek* family spends as much time as possible living in the main long-house and tapping rubber, while the other members of the family remain in the *dampa* and attend to the growing of *padi*.

[2]Government regulations prescribe that no house shall have fewer than 10 apartments, and strictly the *dampa* system is a contravention of this requirement. Sea Dayak Fines, Third Division, 1940; Part V, Section 10e, states: "A Dayak, who does not within a reasonable time move all his *padi* from his farming hut to his house after harvest, shall be considered to have moved within the meaning of this section." Part V, Section 10f, requires that "The person who erects ('*dulu ngentak*') the first post of a new house of less than 10 doors without special permission shall be fined $25 all to Government, and the house shall be dismantled by the builders."

1: Freeman - E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

241. In reading this summary of Iban modes of *padi* consumption it must be constantly borne in mind that we are dealing with what is primarily a subsistence economy. Year by year each *bilek* family is compelled to adapt its standard of living to its available resources of *padi*. In the event of a poor crop, a household will abandon any plans it may have had for the staging of a *gawai*, will cut down temporarily on its flock of chickens, only perform the bare minimum of seasonal rituals, and make but little *tuak*. To some extent this situation may be alleviated by the existence of cash crops such as rubber, or the availability of jungle produce (e.g. *rotan*, *getah*, *jelutong*, etc.) which may be gathered and marketed with Chinese traders. Furthermore, most Iban families possess property (in the form of gongs, jars, etc.) which, in emergency, can be exchanged for *padi*. When their crops fail, wealthy households are often prepared to sacrifice property in order to go on eating rice, but many—and especially the less well off—take to a diet of sago, eked out by other jungle foods.

*Annual Requirements in Padi of the Average Bilek Family*

242. We are now in a position to give a general estimate of the yearly requirements in *padi* of an average *bilek* family, of 5 members. It should be realized however, that what follows represents an estimate of the bare needs of an average household. Every *bilek* family hopes for a surplus over and above these bare requirements; but, as we shall see, in unfavourable years many households do not attain their minimum requirements. The general needs of the household we may list as follows:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (*a*) | *padi* required as seed for next season .. .. | 30 gantangs |
| (*b*) | *padi* required as food for fowls .. .. .. | 40 gantangs |
| (*c*) | *padi* required as dog food .. .. .. | 30 gantangs |
| (*d*) | *padi* required for rituals, offerings, etc. .. | 20 gantangs |
| (*e*) | *padi* required for *tuak* .. .. .. .. | 10 gantangs |

The food requirements of five people—accepting the average of 88 gantangs per head per annum—would be 440 gantangs. Thus, the total amount of *padi* needed by a household of five members would be 570 gantangs, or 114 gantangs per head per annum.[1]

243. This may be accepted as a general average, but once again, it is instructive to note the variations likely to occur, even with a family of only five persons. Let us take three examples from Rumah Nyala. Majau's family (No. 13, with a man, a woman, two children and a suckling) would require only 320 gantangs of *padi* as food, and a total of 450 gantangs. Unyang's family (No. 18, with two women and three children) would need about 360 gantangs as food, and a total of 490 gantangs. Gayar's family (No. 8, with two men, two women and a child) would require 470 gantangs as food, and a total of 600 gantangs.

244. Let us now consider whether these various estimates of yearly requirements are consistent with our data on farm acreages and yields. We have estimated the average area farmed by a household of five members to be about 4 acres. Therefore, to attain a yearly requirement of 570 gantangs (the general estimate quoted in Para. 242 above) a yield of between 17 and 18 bushels per acre would be necessary. For Majau's *bilek* family a yield of only 14 bushels per acre would be required however; for Unyang's about 15 bushels per acre; and for Gayar's almost 19 bushels per acre. These figures, it will be seen, fall within the range of typical yields per acre recorded earlier in this report.

[1]N.B. This is considerably lower than the estimate of 940 gantangs per annum (for a family of 4) given by Mr. R. W. R. Miller ("Sarawak Gazette," 1950, p. 36).

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

years, when a surplus of *padi* has been gained, it is exchanged for gongs, which are then available in years of shortage. Each season, some families succeed in producing a surplus, while others find themselves with a deficit; and so, year by year in an area like the Baleh, scores of different families exchange gongs for *padi*, or *padi* for gongs. Jars (*tajau*), though to a much lesser extent, are used in the same way. Again, money—obtained from the marketing of jungle produce—is often used to purchase *padi*; and of recent years, cash crops—particularly rubber—have become increasingly important.

248. It frequently happens, however that a family is not prepared to part with any of its gongs or other property. In these circumstances recourse is had to the traditional scarcity food of the Iban: sago. Most *bilek* families possess small plantations of sago palms, specially planted as a scarcity crop (Plate 5), for no Iban relishes *mulong* (as prepared sago is called) and it is only eaten under duress when *padi* cannot be easily procured. When planted sago is not available, the men set off to scour the jungle for the wild palms, from which the nomadic tribes of Borneo—such as the Punans—habitually obtain the sago which is the main item of their diet.

*Rubber as a Cash Crop, and its Relation to Padi Cultivation*

249. We have so far been discussing the traditional ways of coping with a *padi* shortage, but to-day, in many parts of the Baleh, the introduction of rubber as a cash crop has drastically changed the situation. As far as I have been able to determine, rubber was first introduced into the Kapit District in 1907 when a prison gang planted some 200 young trees.[1] By 1913, both rubber and cassava were being grown by Iban communities living in the vicinity of Kapit.[2] During the years of disaffection, from 1914-1919, it is probable that little or no rubber was planted in the Baleh region itself, but soon after the Iban were permitted to re-occupy the river, in 1922, planting was resumed. At Rumah Nyala in the Sungai Sut, the first trees to be planted date from about 1924. Some years after this a strange series of events occurred. The story spread, among the Iban, that rubber trees had a strongly deleterious effect on their *padi*; the spirit of the rubber trees (*antu kubal*), so it was said, was able to attack and drive away the *padi* spirits (*antu padi*). Many Iban came to believe this extraordinary tale (which had sprung from a dream), and so deeply that they were persuaded to cut down the rubber trees they had planted. To-day they bewail their stupidity, but because of it, many Iban families in the Baleh region are now without productive rubber plantations.[3]

250. At Rumah Nyala, in 1950, all but four of the twenty-five *bilek* families possessed small rubber plantations. Rubber is prepared for the market in small sheets (*kepin*), and it is convenient therefore, to discuss *bilek* family plantations in terms of the number of sheets which they are capable of yielding when being fully worked. Measurement of some 50 typical *kepin* showed an average weight per sheet of 1·7 katis. (1 kati equals 1 1/3rd lbs.). The family holdings of Rumah Nyala are summarized in Table 23.

[1] "Sarawak Gazette," 1908, p. 13.
[2] "Sarawak Gazette," 1913, p. 118.
[3] This story appears to have had a wide circulation in Sarawak, for it was also encountered by Dr. W. R. Geddes among the Land Dayaks of the First Division.

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

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*Table 23: Bilek Family Rubber Plantations at Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut, in 1950*

| *Daily yield (in sheets) when plantation is being fully worked* | *No. of bilek families* |
|---|---|
| 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 4 | 2 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 6 | 3 |
| 10 | 1 |
| 12 | 1 |
| 15 | 1 |

Three *bilek* families, it will be seen, were in a much better position than the others, and these—as might be expected—were all founding members of Rumah Nyala. Parts of the plantations of these families were tapped on a share-cropping basis by the members of other households, the workers taking half of what they produced and leaving half for the owners. In particular, this kind of work was undertaken by members of the four *bilek* families that were without plantations of their own. Men from other long-houses also engaged in this work.

251. Under favourable conditions one man can produce about seven or eight sheets (*kepin*) of rubber per working day; but when allowance has been made for wet days, the daily output drops to about three or four sheets. Observations carried out in the Second Division showed an output per working day of about 13 katis, but a general average of only about 7·5 katis per day (when reductions for time lost, etc. had been made). At Rumah Nyala, the overall average per man-day was about 4 to 5 katis.

249 435 252. In September, 1949, rubber was being sold at the Kapit bazaar for 30 cents per kati, while rice (*brau*) was available at $1·80 per gantang; thus the production of about 5 katis of rubber per day would provide adequately for the normal requirements in rice of a *bilek* family of 5 or 6 persons. Under these conditions, rubber provided a very good safeguard for households faced with a *padi* shortage from their farms, but it did not seriously compete with farming as a main activity. As we have seen, 15 bushels per acre is a very normal yield for hill *padi*; assuming an expenditure of 60 man-days per acre to produce such a crop (c.f. Para. 201-204), and with rice (*brau*) valued at $1·80 per gantang, the return per day worked would be about $2. This compares favourably with the $1·50 per day (approximately) to be earned from rubber.

249 435 433 253 With the rubber boom of 1950 this balance was completely disturbed. In September, 1950 (one year after the period we have just been discussing), Chinese traders were travelling all the rivers of the Baleh region in search of Iban rubber, and the price offered at Rumah Nyala was $1·50 per kati. Accepting an average daily output per worker of 5 katis, in September, 1950, the production of rubber had become a pursuit at least three times more profitable than the production of *padi*. Hulled rice (*brau*) had risen in price to about $2 per gantang. Under these conditions it is difficult to understand, if one is thinking purely in terms of immediate profit and loss, why farming was not abandoned in favour of full-time rubber production. In the Saribas District of the Second Division,

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951) 1955 OC6 Iban OC6

indeed, there was a marked tendency in this direction. At Gansurai, a Dayak long-house on the banks of the Layar River, for example, 6 of the 19 *bilek* families did not grow any *padi* during the 1950-51 season, and were relying entirely on imported rice which they were able to purchase with money obtained from the sale of rubber. This was no great difficulty. One of the *bilek* families of Gansurai, employed 11 Malays on a share-cropping basis, and in April, 1951, with rubber at $1·15 per kati, the monthly income of this family was about $1,400.

254. At Rumah Nyala, the rubber boom also made itself felt, but not to the extent of any household appreciably reducing the size of its farm. In many cases, however, less than normal attention was paid to farming so that more time would be available for tapping rubber. Unfortunately, I was not able to remain at Rumah Nyala to guage the possible effects of this tendency upon the yields obtained at the 1951 harvest. The reasons why the rubber boom had not, by early 1951, seriously affected *padi* farming in the Baleh region are numerous. First, many families did not possess sufficient rubber to furnish their minimum needs. Further, the Iban did not analyze the changed situation in purely economic terms; their reaction was to continue with the cultivation of *padi*, and to reap what profit they could from rubber in the time left to them. (Towards the end of 1950, for example, many young men elected to stay at home and tap rubber rather than go on a *bejalai*). For this, they had a number of sound arguments. One element of great importance is the fact that to Iban palates their own hill rice is immensely preferable to the polished rice which is all they can purchase from the local bazaars. Anyone who has eaten hand-pounded, hill rice will appreciate this point, for hill rice of good quality has a delicious nutty flavour, which makes ordinary white rice seem insipid and savourless.[1] Again, from past experience, the Iban knew how risky it is to rely on supplies of imported rice; and here, certainly, they were on firm ground. Finally, as we have seen, the protracted work which accompanies the cultivation of rice is principally the duty of women; in 1950, there was a marked tendency for the general management of the farm to be handed over to the women of a family, while the men lived at the long-house and devoted their time to tapping rubber. In February, 1951, when I left Rumah Nyala, it had already been decided that during the coming season all *bilek* families would farm secondary jungle in the environs of the main long-house, and that after the harvest had been reaped (i.e. in 1952) all this land would be planted with rubber. Similar extensions of rubber plantations were taking place throughout the entire Baleh region.

255. As this brief survey shows, rubber production has become an extremely important element in Iban economy. At present it is still subsidiary to *padi* cultivation, and acts as a valuable safeguard against rice shortages which are liable to occur in unfavourable years. As long as rubber retains this subsidiary position it has a most useful fuction to serve, but there is always a danger that it may tend to surplant *padi* farming as a main activity, and this—in view of the world rice shortage—is a contingency against which active measures must be taken.

[1]Cf. Mr. Duncan J. de Soyza's statement: ". . . . some hill paddy varieties have outstanding qualities. The cooked rice of the scented varieties has a very agreeable odour and is pleasing to the palate. In eating qualities it is superior to wet rice." (Ref. Tropical Agriculturist, Vol. 100, pp. 211-218). Mr. de Soyza also points out that "from a nutritive point of view hill paddy rice is superior to wet land rice, being richer in protein compounds." (Cf. the findings of Prof. O. Kellner).

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6



husk, or padi state, it may be kept for years without injury, and is in this respect supposed to be equal to the production of India or America.

Besides the farms above described, the Dyaks have small gardens, usually the property of women, in which they plant vegetables of different kinds, principally the 'trong,' brenjal of the East, and egg-plant of Europe, sugar-cane, plantains, yams, sweet potatoes, chilies, &c. A few plants of tobacco are generally found in their farms, the leaves of which they prepare by drying for their own use. Sisawi, a kind of mustard, and a species of millet, are also planted amongst the padi in small quantities. The sugar-cane, which grows very freely, is only esteemed for its saccharine juice, which they extract like the Malays, by chewing. Of the plantains they have several fine varieties; that most esteemed is the 'pisang amas,' or golden plantain; its fruit is small and not angular, the bunch is, however, uncommonly large—it is of a rich golden yellow colour, and much finer flavour than most of the other kinds. The 'pisang merah,' or red plantain, called 'pisang udang,' or prawn plantain, by the Malays, and 'pisang baddat,' are the next in esteem, and resemble each other, except in colour, which in the former is red, in the latter yellow, with green ends; many others are very fine, but as the varieties are so numerous it is unnecessary to particularize them: the 'pisang tandok,' or horn plantain, bears fruit of from twelve to eighteen inches in length, and is a well-

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6



The cloth which the women weave is of two kinds, striped and figured. The former is made by employing successively threads of different colours in stretching the web. This is simple enough. The other pattern is produced by a more elaborate process. Undyed white thread is used, and the web stretched. The woman sketches on this the pattern which she wishes to appear on the cloth, and carefully notes the different colours for the different parts. If, for example, she wishes the pattern to be of three colours—blue, red, and white—she takes up the threads of the web in little rolls of about twenty threads, and carefully wraps a quantity of vegetable fibre tightly round those parts which are intended to be red or white, leaving exposed those parts which are intended to be blue. After she has in this manner treated the whole web, she immerses it in a blue dye made from indigo, which the Dyaks plant themselves. The dye takes hold of the exposed portions of the threads, but is prevented by the vegetable fibre from colouring the other parts. Thus the blue portion of the pattern is dyed. After it has been dried, the vegetable fibre is cut off, and the blue parts tied up, and only the portion to be dyed red exposed, and the web put into a red dye. In this way the red part of the pattern is obtained. By a similar method all the colours needed are produced. The weft is of one colour, generally light brown.

Dyak weaving is a very slow process. The woman sits on the floor, and the threads of the weft are put through one by one. The cloth they make is particularly strong and serviceable. The women seem to blend the colours they use in a pleasing manner, though there is a great sameness in the designs.

Mats are made either with split cane or from the outer

314 "a good nut-year is a great event in Sarawak and provides a literal windfall for the native tribes,"

[439] and, it should be added, for the Chinese shopkeepers, for the "windfall" quickly ends up with the Chinese merchants who have staked the illipe nut gatherers and collect their loans, or purchase the nuts while selling outboard motors, sewing machines, gold and other valuables to the Ibans.[12]

[423] [439] Sarawak abounds in fruits, and the trees are held under customary rights. Ibans and other indigenous groups collect the fruits when they bear, and either sell them to Chinese hawkers or bring them to town to sell. We will give more attention to this in Chapter Four.

2. Rubber

175 177 249 Para rubber (Hevea brasiliensis) was first introduced into Sarawak in 1882 when Bishop Charles Hose planted one seedling in Kuching.

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314 243 [12] The relative abundance of forest products and especially illipe nuts when they are bearing has been a significant factor in the casualness with which many indigenese approach rice-cultivation. Prior to the planting of rubber and pepper in this District, men took off to collect jungle produce in the period between planting and harvesting rice. Bailey described how Malays in the Lingga area gave up rice-cultivation for collecting and fishing, finding the task easier and more pleasant (SG 2 June, No. 437, 1902). Sometimes rice has been neglected to the extent that crops are lost, as one Resident complained: "What I feared might happen has come to pass, the padi having been deserted by the Dyaks for the easily collected and remunerative engkabang crop, with the result that the majority of the Dyaks are short of rice and will have to obtain their supplies from other sources. They have plenty of money and will be able to obtain supplies. . . "(SG A/A 1 August, No. 839, 1923). Critics of Ibans who favor collecting over rice-cultivation fail to note that the rewards of the former are much more certain at the times when produce is available.

A/A [Sarawak Gazette--Analyst]

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu



175 177 249 The potential of para rubber went unrecognized until about the turn of the century when the Rajah, foreseeing the economic importance of the new exotic, established Experimental Rubber Plantations at Segu and Satap in the First Division. By 1908, 15,000 seeds were obtained at Segu and 44,000 at Satap. Eighteen thousand of these seeds were sent to Sibu.

Experiments in rubber planting had been carried out in the Sibu area from the first years of this century. Pengulu Dalam Munan, a famous Iban war-leader, had planted a garden of the local getah rian (Isonandra gutta) with which the Government also was experimenting at that time (SG 448, 2 May, 1903). According to one of the early settlers of Sibu, Ling Wen Tsung, para rubber was introduced into the Sibu area by Wong Ging Huo, a Methodist minister who brought rubber seedlings to Sarawak after an Annual Conference in Singapore.[13] Wong's trees were producing by 1911, when the price of rubber was "700 dollars per picul," according to Ling.[14] Altogether, Wong planted 3,000 trees at Sungai Nawah and shortly thereafter, Kuo Yeu Tiok planted 1,000 trees at Ensurai.

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[13] "In Singapore he saw rubber seedlings used for the Malayan industry, costing 700 dollars per picul. So he went to Malaya and bought some seeds. He brought the rubber seeds in a particular way. He put the seeds in a box filled with coal ash and placed the rubber seeds in the ashes. In this way he brought them to Kuching and Sibu and after a journey lasting about five weeks all the seeds became plants." (Ling 1966-28).

[14] Ling writes: "He made so much that he could not carry all the coins home. This led others to follow his example as they said, 'rubber trees make money'" (ibid.).

175 177 249 The Ibans were quick to take up rubber planting and, encouraged by boom prices in 1910, engaged in planting gardens along the Batang Rejang, Batang Leba'an and Batang Igan, as well as on land off a number of tributaries. By the mid-1920's, more than 100,000 acres of rubber had been planted in Sarawak, and when the Great Depression ushered in the era of restriction,[15] the total area devoted to rubber exceeded 220,000 acres.

Rubber planting in Sarawak was done on small-holdings by Chinese and indigenous farmers. Charles Brooke adamantly refused to permit the development of rubber estates by outsiders and in an editorial of 1970[A] wrote:

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> "Rich companies pay their managers ruinous salaries and no doubt will soon make use of manuers which are always dangerous in being liable to germinate insects and vermin which often cause disease and failure in the trees and crop. Sarawak would be more satisfied with a more gradual development, with less capital expended and smaller losses in the case of failure."

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[656] [15] State-wide tapping holidays were ordered every fourth month according to terms of the International Rubber Regulation Agreement of 1934, which Sarawak joined under considerable pressure from the British Colonial Office. This method of restriction was not effective and a "coupon system" was introduced in 1937, under which each owner was given coupons entitling him to market a specified amount of rubber, dependent on the size of his holding.

[A] [The author presumably means 1870--Analyst]

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu



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> "'. . . These figures are not wholly attributable to failure of crops of increase of immigration, but largely due to partial or complete abandonment of their farming life by large sections of the natives of the country in favour of rubber planting. . .'"
>
> "'. . . So long as it pays the natives better to plant rubber and buy their rice, they will naturally prefer to do less hard work on their padi farms than in previous years.'"

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In addition to making rubber production a viable economic alternative to small holders, the Rajah's policy was influential on the patterns of movement of the shifting Iban cultivators. By making it possible and encouraging each family to plant its own rubber estate, rather than allowing companies to plant large gardens to be worked either by plantation workers living in company quarters, as in Sumatra, or commuting, as in parts of Malaya, the Rajah made ownership of real property and interests therein a new fact in Iban adaptation. In contrast to the high degree of mobility characteristic of shifting cultivators, owners of rubber gardens are more sedentary, residing in proximity to the trees they tap daily. As one informant said, Kaki kami nyau lekat tegal getah ("Our feet were stuck because of rubber,"

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Anyau Bakit, 16 September, 1969. In some areas, for example, Bawang Assan, Ibans built permanent longhouses for the first time as they planted their rubber gardens. The eight-door rumah papan built close to the present-day site of Rumah Riang, was a novelty because of its

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu



permanence and because it was the first longhouse in memory built of planks.[18] In other areas, for example Oya Road and specifically Rumah Tindit and Rumah Meruan, the advent of rubber has been influential in the fragmentation of longhouses which have been abandoned as individual families moved away to be nearer to their gardens.[19]

Adaptation to rubber production was a shift in the value system and social structure of the Iban community. For, whereas previously successful rice cultivation was a requisite for any Iban male seeking recognition and upward mobility, rubber planting opened a new way to wealth and acquisition of economic security, so much desired and a sure sign of the blessings of the gods. The conflict between the traditional padiculture and rubber growing was expressed in a wide-spread story that rubber ate rice.[20] According to one version,

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[18] Owing to the practice of shifting cultivation, longhouses were impermanent structures, built of softwood posts, split bamboo floors, bark walls and thatched roofs, according to several informants (Unchat Chok, Tuai Rumah Gaong).

[19] The ceremonial importance of the longhouse continues and _bilik_ - families return occasionally for _gawai_ and other ritual activities.

[20] Pringle describes a similar story among the Saribas Ibans (1970-203), Freeman among the Balleh Ibans (1955-105), and Geddes among the Land Dayaks.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu



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"Aing of Telok Bulat, Binatang, put his padi out to dry on a mat on the tanju', and went off to his farm. When he returned, the rice was all gone - not a kernel was left. The next day, the same thing happened. As there was no strong wind on either day, Aing was suspicious, andon the third day, sneaked around to the back of his house and up into the sadau from where he could keep an eye on his rice. He noticed a slight movement and saw the branches of a rubber tree bending toward the rice, closer and closer, until the rubber leaves - notice, they are shaped like a naga (dragon)- ate the rice."

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As a result of the story and other cultural pressures, an unknown number of Ibans cut their rubber trees down, a move that they were to regret later. Those who refused to destroy their rubber trees, such as the fathers of Unchat Chok and Jonathan Bangau, prominent Iban businessmen in Sibu, reaped large profits during the periods when prices were high and through wise investment (well-advised by Chinese friends) became wealthy.[21]

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Another far-reaching effect of the Rajah's policy on rubber was the development of a state-wide trading network to handle the exportation of rubber, involving Ibans, Chinese, Malays and others in production and, until recently, principally Chinese in the position of middlemen. Until 1964, when it was displaced by timber, rubber was Sarawak's chief export product for almost thirty years, and the network

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[21] Chok Apai Unchat was a close friend of Wong father of Mr. Wong Soon Kai, a Sibu-born surgeon, and through the elder Wong's advice bought a shophouse on Island Road that is now the property of his son.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu



000 If we may speak of a mercantile mentality, this quite literally is the ethos of the business community of Sibu. A majority of ties within individual networks, both formal and informal, are based upon expectations of trade and exchange, profit and gain. Philanthropic activities and the patronage of various sporting events draws attention to the sponsors - as well as to the trades they represent.

177 439 441 Although Ibans and other indigenes have shared in Sibu's growth in ways already described, viz. through supplying jungle products, rubber, pepper, and labor, few of them have owned shophouses and run businesses in the pasar. Notable exceptions include Messrs. Unchat anak Chok and Jonathan Bangau, each of whom inherited a shophouse from his father.[40] Both men have appreciated a considerable and steady income from the rental of their shops. "Pasar Bangau" has been a point of reference among Ibans in giving directions in Sibu. Bangau also is involved in several business enterprises, including serving as chairman of the Glass Sand Company, Limited, which supplies sand for a Japanese firm, and has an authorized capital of one million Malaysian dollars.

441 177 183 369 Of more immediate affect upon the Iban community has been the dissemination of those values concomitant with the mercantile mentality

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[40] Chok, the late father of Unchat, was a close friend of the father of Mr. Wong Soon Kai, a distinguished Sibu surgeon, and was advised in his investments by the elder Wong. It is significant that the fathers of Unchat and Bangau were among those Iban who refused to cut their rubber trees when the conflict between traditional rice cultivation and the new rubber planting gave rise to the story of rubber eating rice (cf. page 27).

[249]

249 511 The fall of rubber prices over the past two years has made the situation of many more Ibans critical. We have noted in Chapter One that most of the rubber produced by Ibans is either unsmoked sheet or Grade 5 (RSS), for which tappers may expect ten cents (Malaysian) per cattie. It is not surprising that most people have stopped tapping their trees,[8] and in some cases actually have cut down their trees.

659 [113] [484] Maintenance of security within the Third Division is an awesome task. Divided by the Rejang River and its scores of tributaries, the land is a patchwork of swamps and hillocks in the lower areas, rising to high hills cut by swiftly flowing streams in the upper reaches. Travel is difficult at best for roads for virtually non-existent outside the pasars and the Sibu-Oya-Kuching development. Despite modern weaponry and airborne troops, the mushroom tactics of the elusive terrorists in the heavily wooded terrain make their containment a militarist's nightmare.[9]

167 Considering the problems of making a living and the unsettled conditions due to terrorist activities over against the attractions which many Ibans perceive in urban areas, it is understandable why some of their number have opted for life in the pasar, and why we predict that more are

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[8] Except those persons who have mature high-yielding trees.

[9] One official estimates the number of terrorists in the Third Division at 700, but the exact number is unknown, and by strikes and hiding they rarely encounter security forces except by design.